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Rural Information Center

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National Agricultural Library

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**GAO CONVENES RURAL
DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM**

Congress charged the General Accounting Office (GAO) to assist them in identifying the major economic issues facing rural America. GAO assembled a symposium of 78 rural experts for this purpose. The symposium, held June 11-12, 1992, included local and regional leaders, financial experts, members of nonprofit associations and representatives from local, state and federal government. The resulting report, *Rural Development, Rural America Faces Many Challenges*, is a collection of papers presented at the symposium.

Symposium participants agreed that three major characteristics make it difficult for many rural areas to remain viable under current and predicted economic conditions.

These characteristics include: remoteness, low population density and dependence on a particular industry. To further complicate problems, rural areas often do not have the influence that more populated areas have and find it difficult to compete for resources.

Three needs must be addressed before rural areas can overcome these challenges. Rural areas need to gain access to information about and expertise in areas such as business planning and development and international competition; rural areas need a more educated work force; and, rural revitalization efforts must address the problems of sustaining the environment, improving infrastructure, and capitalizing on the benefits of telecommunications.

Overall, symposium participants concluded that rural viability depends on the perspective of local planners who see the "big picture," and on flexible federal programming that can accommodate a variety of local needs.

"One-size-fits-all" federal programs are not as likely to be effective for the broad range of problems facing rural areas. Traditional agricultural programs offered by federal policy do not meet the needs of rural communities where a steadily decreasing number of residents depend on farm income.



Copies of this report, GAO/RCED-93-35, may be obtained for \$2 each (first one free), accompanied by a check or money order payable to the: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877; or by calling (202) 275-6214.

**RURAL COMMUNITIES: New
Television Series**

Annenberg/CPB Collection released a thirteen part, college-level telecourse exploring rural America, entitled: *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. The series began airing on public television stations throughout the country this January.

The series "visits sixteen diverse regions across the country, delving into the difficulties and joys faced by individuals, families, and communities in rural areas." The series includes interviews from residents who are "seldom heard in the mass media," nevertheless, they all have an opinion on

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the past, present and future of their rural community.

Some of the questions addressed in the series are "why is land so rich in resources unable to support those who live there, how do communities balance tradition with change, and how can growth be sustained without sacrificing the sense of community important to those living in rural areas which account for more than 90 percent of the nation?"

In addition to the thirteen-part series, the telecourse is comprised of a textbook, a study guide and a faculty guide, fulfilling a one-semester

course requirement for courses on social problems, community studies, or rural sociology.

Those who want to find out more about the exact date should call their local PBS station. For those who would like to enroll in the telecourse for credit, or to purchase the series on videocassette, contact: 1-800-LEARNER. The cost is \$350.00 for the series, or \$29.95 per episode.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Patricia John, RIC Coordinator, gave a presentation on February 22, at the National Rural Development Coordination Meeting held in Globe, AZ, February 22-24.

FY93 RURAL INFORMATION CENTER ANALYSIS

- User location
- Rural topics
- Affiliation

STATES, TERRITORIES, ETC. SUBMITTING HIGHEST NUMBER OF REQUESTS

Illinois.....	7%
District of Columbia	6%
Maryland.....	5%
California, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania & Texas (4% each).....	20%
Colorado, Minnesota, New York (3% each)	9%
Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin (2 each)	34%
All Others (23 states, 1 territory, 13 foreign countries).....	19%

BREAKDOWN OF RURAL QUESTIONS

Health Services	53%
Economic Viability.....	31%
Quality of Life	10%
Local Government Services	5%
Leadership	1%

AFFILIATION BREAKDOWN

Health Care Professionals, Organizations, State & Local Health Offices, etc.....	19%
Individuals.....	15%
Universities & Other Educational Institutions	14%
State & County Extension Service	12%
Businesses	8%
USDA Officials.....	7%
Local Officials & Economic Development & Community Organizations (5% each).....	10%
Federal Officials (non-USDA) & Libraries (4% each).....	8%
Special Interest Groups	3%
Congress & State Officials (2% each)	4%